



**THE NEW JERSEY
ITALIAN AND ITALIAN AMERICAN
HERITAGE COMMISSION**



**Community Outreach Relations Committee
&
Community Advisory Council**

**REPORT
on the**

***1st New Jersey
Congress of Italian American Organizations***

October 23, 2004

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I. Introduction

Overview

The purpose of this Report is to provide the New Jersey Italian and Italian American Heritage Commission, the Community Advisory Council and the participating public an analysis of the successful 1st New Jersey Congress of Italian American Organizations, held on October 23, 2004.

At the Congress, the general attending public provided some critical perspectives on the relative importance of the projects under consideration by the Commission and the Commission's Community Advisory Council. These perspectives were presented to the Congress, primarily during the working sessions, by the public and recorded for use by the Commission.

Only with involvement, collaboration, cooperation and funding from the Italian American community can these projects be brought to fruition. This "idea origination" session was tremendously insightful and useful, as it represents the first step in statewide community participation in these projects by the general public.

The Commission hopes to hold an equally successful 2nd New Jersey Congress of Italian American Organizations in the Fall of 2005 and expresses its gratitude for the involvement, interest and participation of all those who attended.

Contents of the Report

At the request of the Commission, this Report is organized into three major sections. The first section provides an overview of how the Congress was conceptualized and the logistics required to organize this major event. The second section analyzes the attendance of this first-ever statewide convention. The final section provides a documentation of the resolutions and the recommendations generated from the workshop attendees.

II. Development of the Congress

Background to the Congress

The concept for bringing together the Italian American community in the form of the 1st New Jersey Congress of Italian American Organizations originated during the first Community Advisory Council Meeting in February 2004. At that meeting, the seventeen members of the Council, under the leadership of Commissioner Richard Bilotti and Co-chairpersons Mr. Frank Gargione and Dr. Eileen Poiani, addressed the legislative mandate of the Commission to work with the Italian American community in New Jersey.

Italian American Leadership Convocations Precedents

During the prior year, the Commission hosted two Convocations for the Italian American community leadership, one in March 2003 and one in September 2003, in order to seek input from the community on the programs of the Commission. A third leadership Convocation, spearheaded by the newly appointed Community Advisory Council was planned for March 2004. As part of the February planning meeting, the Council considered proposals to strengthen the coordination among the over 400 Italian American organizations, institutions and groups. Specifically, community projects were identified that would encourage collaboration and unification of efforts. One of these proposals included the development of a sizable convention for the leadership of these organizations, which could possibly be held in late 2004. The Council wished to test this idea by surveying the attendees of the March 27, 2004 statewide leadership Convocation.

March Italian American Convocation

The Community Advisory Council then presented this idea of a convention to the Commission in March 2004 and added this idea to the focus group discussions that were run at the March leadership Convocation. The Commission endorsed the proposal of a convention that would assist in the networking of the Italian American community – as it fulfilled the legislative mandate – and the Convocation participants endorsed the proposal as one of the top 10 long-range projects for the Commission. Specifically, the approximately 90 Convocation attendees recommended to the Commission that the idea of the development of a convention and the “promotion of unity and fellowship” ranked as the 7th and 8th most important issues for the Commission to address.

Commission Endorsements and Guidelines

Following further deliberations at the monthly Commission Board meetings between April and June, the Commission assessed the possibility of addressing all of the top ten recommendations from the Convocation through the hosting of a convention that would include working sessions. The professional staff of the Commission was tasked with planning the program and organizing the logistics of the proposed convention in June 2004 and brought the detailed proposals back to the Community Advisory Council at their June Board Meeting.

The issues and challenges for the convention that had to be carefully considered included the following:

- ***Purpose of the Convention*** – Given the success of the focus group sessions held during the March Convocation, the Council wished to create a participatory, “brain-storming” environment, where individuals from the community would provide ideas and recommendations to the Commission. The purpose of the convention was not intended to be a celebratory or an informative gathering, but a true working session and a forum for idea generation – “by the community, for the community”. In particular, the objective was to involve delegations from the Italian American organizations.
- ***Desired Attendance*** – The Council hoped to bring together more than 90 Italian American community leaders to discuss the recommendations developed at the March Convocation. While, over 1,000 individuals had registered for the Commission’ April 25th Italian Liberation Day Celebration held at the Governor’s Mansion, that event was celebratory in nature – the convention was meant to attract individuals who were willing to participate, not just observe. A target of approximately several hundred was suggested as the goal. In particular, representation of the Italian American organizations was sought, as this would facilitate collaboration on various proposals. As this had not been attempted on a statewide level, the level of participation was uncertain.
- ***Timing and Date*** – Given professional staff time and cost constraints, sufficient time had to be provided to plan, publicize and organize the event. In addition, a symbolic month was targeted, in order to add significance to the hosting of the convention. Since October had been proclaimed Italian Heritage Month in the past by the New Jersey Government, the idea was to host the event in October, at a time that would not conflict with other

statewide Italian American community events, such as Columbus Day. The selection of this date provided only 3-4 months to implement the event.

- ***Budget*** – Due to the low level of funding provided by the New Jersey Government, the cost of the convention had to be kept extremely low. While the Commission had authorized approximately \$20,000 for the use of the Community Outreach Relations Committee and the Community Advisory Council, that funding was completely contingent on external donations, as opposed to State funding. The level of donations was not anticipated to reach any level near \$20,000 by the time of the Congress. Therefore, facilities, hospitality, publicity, advertisement and personnel costs had to be kept to a relatively low level and funding sources had to be obtained. As benchmarks, the cost of the 90-person March Convocation totaled approximately \$16,000 (\$6,000 of hard costs and \$10,000 of soft costs -- hourly wages of personnel), while the 1,000-person Italian Liberation Day Celebration totaled approximately \$55,000 (\$30,000 of hard costs, \$10,000 of facility and security in-kind donations and \$15,000 of soft costs).
- ***Facilities and Location*** – In order to attract Italian American leaders from all over the state, a central geographic location had to be selected. More importantly, a facility that would provide a multi-media auditorium, break-out rooms, parking and luncheon hall was needed for the convention proceedings. While hotels and conference centers were considered, the Council selected Rutgers University at the New Brunswick campus for its prestige, located and facilities.
- ***Name of the Convention*** – The Council originally planned to call the convention the 4th Semi-Annual Community Advisory Council Convocation, which reflected a continuity of the three prior leadership Convocations. However, the name “Congress” was suggested, in order to promote the idea of a participatory convention for Italian American organizations. If this Congress proved successful, future Congresses could be organized around specific delegations and representatives from Italian American organizations in New Jersey. The name “Congress” was significant as it reflected a government-style assembly of representative groups. Care had to be taken in the marketing and publicity process to ensure that the “Congress” was a convention – neither a new organization, nor a competitive group.

- ***Theme of the Convention*** -- While the purpose of the Congress was to involve the Italian American community in the development of the Commission's programs, a theme had to be chosen to focus participants on the objectives of the Congress. Since the March Convocation focus groups identified the idea of the "promotion of unity and fellowship", the Council approved the idea of unity, in the form of "Unifying the Efforts of New Jersey's Italian American Organizations" as the theme of the Congress.
- ***Basic Program*** – To make the program of the day attractive for the working participants, a carefully constructed series of timed events had to be laid out. The events that the Council considered included:
 - *Ceremonial Opening* – The addition of pomp and circumstance reflecting both the Italian and American cultures and governments was deemed important to demonstrate the grandeur of the event, the support of the State government and the support of the Italian government. The importance of the ceremony was to remind people of their American citizenship and their Italian heritage;
 - *Keynote Speakers* – As the convention was a state-sponsored event, representative speakers from the New Jersey government, the Italian government and Rutgers University (as the host facility) were considered;
 - *Main Panel Discussion* – Since the theme of the Congress was unification, the opening working session was structured as a panel discussion that would focus on the prior efforts and the desirability of coordinating, uniting and collaborating among the Italian American community. The involvement of the major national Italian American organizations was important, so panel speakers were considered that would have representation from these organizations;
 - *Break-Out Sessions* – The topics for the working sessions were principally drawn from the March Convocation recommendations from the focus groups. These topics included:

Promoting the Italian Language in New Jersey
 Preserving Italian Heritage for Future Generations
 Combating Stereotyping and Discrimination
 Promoting Italian Culture in New Jersey
 Building Italian American Business Relations
 Developing an Italian American Summer School
 Promoting the Italian Heritage Curriculum
 Developing Italian American Political Delegation

Community Advisory Council Adoption

At the end of June, the Community Advisory Council voted to approve the basic program of the convention and revised, edited and finalized the guidelines addressed at the meeting. Although ideas were presented that would combine the idea of a working convention with a celebration of Italian culture in one day, the Council narrowed the program to focus on the working session. The theme of unification was originated at this meeting and the Council changed the name of the convention to “Congress”. By consensus agreement, the Council believed that the use of the word “Congress” would be better reflective of the purpose of the convention and identified several groups that sought to promote unity with the names of “Congress” or ‘Federation’. Since this was a statewide event, rather than the formation of a new organization, the Council believed that the concept of a “Congress” could evolve over time into a true representative delegation meeting for all of the New Jersey Italian American organizations.

Once the Council approved the basic structure of the Congress, the recommendations were presented at the July Commission meeting, whereby the Commission endorsed the fully-laid out program.

Program Refinements and Additions

As the professional staff initiated the logistical organization of the Congress during the summer months, several ideas were added to the program:

- Exhibition Hall – Italian American organizations and interested parties were offered table space in an exhibition hall to promote their organizations and activities. A number of academic institutions and Italian American businesses also requested space;
- Networking Time – The Council strongly felt that appropriate time should be allocated during a coffee session to enable Congressional attendees with time to network among themselves;
- Entertainment – To provide some distraction during the long working day, two entertainment sessions were included: 1) traditional Italian and Italian American musical renditions; and 2) youth-oriented musical performance of a fusion rock-opera in Italian and English;
- Scholarly Presentation -- In addition to the working program, the presentation of a popular historical work related to the Italians of New Jersey was added;

- Documentary Trailer Viewing – As a preview of things to come in 2005, the New Jersey Italian American Foundation provided a “rough cut” screening of “The Italians of New Jersey”, a documentary promoting the achievements of the Italian American community in New Jersey that is being co-produced with New Jersey Network (NJN);
- Commission Displays – Two large graphical displays were created by the Commission to showcase two projects under development: 1) the development of the state cultural center known as the Casa Italiana; and 2) the preliminary results of a demographics study identifying the location of prominent Italian American communities in New Jersey;
- Book Sales – A table was made available to the Commission’s Institute for Italian and Italian American Heritage Studies to display and sell their recent publications to the community.

Facilities Walk-Through

Once the basic program and refinements were mapped out, the Staff engaged in a series of mock walk-throughs of the identified facilities at Rutgers University to simulate the program and traffic patterns. Organization and timing of the program were calculated and speaking/seating arrangements were planned. Simulations of movements from parking, entrance into the facilities, registration, seating, movement into the exhibition hall, movement to break-out conference rooms, seat arrangements and multimedia equipment set-up were all planned at least 2 months in advance of the event. A total of five walk-throughs were simulated.

Panel and Session Speaker Contacts

The Commission and the Community Advisory Council began inviting possible speakers and session leaders as early as July for the October event. A total of twenty outside speakers, not including those Commissioners and Community Advisory Council Members who were asked to speak, present or lead a Session, were invited and attended.

For the keynote speakers, the Commission invited seven possible speakers: Governor McGreevey (representing the State of NJ), former Governors DiFrancesco and Florio (representing the two Italian American governors), the two Consul Generals of Italy from New York and Philadelphia (representing the Government of Italy), the Vice Consul of Italy from Newark (representing the Government of Italy in New Jersey), and the President of Rutgers University. Of

the seven, five attended the event, with Governor McGreevey sending a letter to be read and President McCormick of Rutgers sending a letter and Dean Barry Qualls to represent him.

For the Main Panel discussion on the “Unification of the Efforts of Italian American Organizations”, the Commission – through the efforts of Cav. Joseph Coccia of the Coccia Institute and the Community Advisory Council – invited the National Presidents of UNICO, the Order of the Sons of Italy in America and the National Italian American Foundation. In addition, two state organizations were contacted -- specifically, the Columbian Foundation and Italia Oggi. The Presidents, Board Members or Senior Officers were present to represent their organizations.

For the Sessions that were not led by Commissioners, the Commission invited a number of individuals with specialties in the topics of interest being discussed. A total of eight additional presenters were invited to participate and all attended.

Publicity of Event

In order to achieve a targeted attendance rate of several hundred people for an all-day working session on a Saturday in October, a multi-prong approach to publicity had to be developed. Given the limited availability of funding, the professional staff opted to target the Commission’s active database of roughly two thousand individuals, instead of expending scarce funds on a broad-based advertising campaign. The specific elements of the publicity plan incorporated the following elements:

Mailings:

- July “Save the Date” Mailings to database (1,200 send-outs)
- August “Save the Date” Reminders to database (1,600 send-outs)
- September Congress Invitations to database (2,000 send-outs)
- September Italian American Organization invitation (300 send-outs)
- September High Schools with Italian Language Invites (150 send-outs)
- September Speaker Confirmation Invitations & Program (100 send-outs)
- September Legislator Invitations (120+ send-outs)
- **Total Mailings = Over 6,000 targeted letters**

Media Blanket:

- Sent July Press Announcement to Italian Tribune
- Sent September Press Announcement to Italian Tribune

- Sent October Press Announcement to Italian Tribune
- Sent October Announcement to 300 media outlets through PR consultant
- October Advertisement purchased in America Oggi (\$200)
- October airing of three 30-minute cable television sessions on the Congress in 30 townships in North Jersey and Manhattan in October

Italian American Organization Leveraging:

- Notification examples:
 - Requested National Order of the Sons of Italy to notify 40 NJ Lodges;
 - Requested UNICO National to notify 50 NJ Chapters;
 - Requested Italian American Police Society of New Jersey to notify by email 5,000 membership base; and
 - Requested Italia Oggi to notify by email membership of 1,000+
- Distribution examples:
 - Distributed information at the Festa Italiana on September 18th;
 - Distributed information at the Mercer County Italian American Festival on September 24th;
- Group presentation examples:
 - Amici della Lingua dinner meeting;
 - Umbria Society dinner meeting;
 - Rutgers University student information sessions (x3)

Website Information:

- Posted event on Website in August;
- Updated website for program and directions in September

Telecommunications:

- Proactive calls made to selected organizations during August-October period
- Passive information promoted to inbound callers during Sept-October period

Advanced Registration

In order to get an accurate headcount for session break-outs and the amounts of food to be ordered, all publicity fliers requested that attendees register in advance. The contact numbers given were for the Commission office. If attendees called

during office hours, they were queried on their preferences for the break-out session.

Directions to the Facility

Directions for Rutgers University and a parking map were provided in the September invitations and were posted on the website.

Facilities

The Rutgers University Student Conference Center was selected for the event, due to the large and inexpensive rooms available for the event. The Congress required a large auditorium that could seat 500 persons and that had multimedia capabilities. Given the scheduled program, the auditorium needed to have a projector and huge screen for video and power point presentations and a sound system for speakers and Congress-wide announcements. In addition, the Exhibition Hall had to have standing room for the same number of people, a sound system and space for food and exhibit tables. At least 4 separate conference rooms with seating for 25 or more people were needed for 50% of the sessions. The other four sessions were held in the auditorium, which had the capability to be subdivided into four quadrants. The facilities also required bathrooms, handicapped access and delivery access. Parking had to be situated close enough to the facilities center.

Logistics Management of Event

To manage the dynamics of the complex day-long Congress, the professional staff developed several processes to enable the event to run smoothly. These procedures included the following:

Registration: 2 large registration tables were set-up with room for up to 8 individuals. Registration books were created for each registrar with the names and contact information for all attendees that registered in advance. Attendees were asked to confirm their information, and if the information was incorrect, the registrant would correct it. High school students were given a separate registrant, due to the fact that most students did not provide contact information during the advanced registration process. Any Commissioner, Community Advisory Council Member or event speaker was provided with a colored name tag – dignitaries were coded yellow, Commissioners and Staff were coded blue, Community Advisory Council Members were coded red and extra name tags were coded green. If an attendee wished to have a name-tag, a pen and green tag were provided to fill in the information by the attendee. A decision was taken by Staff not to provide name-tags for the attendees, due to the large number of participants. In addition, two Registration Captains were assigned to oversee the process and to “catch”

individuals coming through the main doors, so that attendees were guided to the registration tables. At the tables, programs and other hand-outs were available.

Seating: Seating charts were developed to ensure that all Commissioners, Community Advisory Council Members and speakers at the Congress would have reserved seats. A Commissioner seating section was established to the right of the dais and the first two rows of the twin column seating area was set aside for the other individuals. Specific name seating arrangements were made for most individuals, while others would take seats marked “Reserved” or “Commissioner”. The attendees had first come, first serve seating in the auditorium. Additionally, approximately 50% seating capacity for the expected attendees was provided in the exhibition hall.

Exhibition Tables: The Exhibition Hall tables were mapped out and organizations were assigned table areas. Zones were subdivided into organizations, educational institutions and businesses. A zone was allocated to the breakfast and lunch tables. Groups with tables were requested to arrive between 7:30am and 9:00am. All tables were marked with long signs, in the event that groups did not bring their own display banners.

Traffic Management: Traffic flows during the event were carefully coordinated. Personnel were assigned to attempt to move individuals coming to the event to register at the Registration Tables. A Set-Up Captain was assigned to direct groups to their tables. A-Placard signs were developed in strategic locations at both the front and rear entry of the facility to identify the buildings for attendees. Personnel were assigned to the parking area and the front entrance area to guide in attendees. Registration Captains at the front entrance directed attendees to the Registration Tables. Additional Personnel were stationed at the service entrances to guide individuals to the Registration Table. During the Break-Out Sessions, Personnel held banners and guided attendees to the various conference rooms. Using the public address system, which was connected to the auditorium and the exhibition hall, attendees were reminded of the beginning and ending of program events. Announcement of changes were also made over the public address system.

Hospitality and Refreshments

Due to the limited budget, the Community Advisory Council opted to provide a continental breakfast and a boxed lunch. Arrangements were made, using a projected head count, with the Rutgers University Catering Services, for a simple breakfast (coffee, juices, water plus bagels and pastries) – which was refreshed for the networking coffee break – and a simple sandwich lunch (five types of

sandwiches, snacks, cookie dessert plus water, coffee and sodas). Arrangements were made in September with two upward revisions of headcount. Approximately 450 lunches were ordered, two days prior to the event.

Recruitment of Volunteer Staffing

Given the Commission's limited professional staffing, a significant number of volunteers had to be recruited to manage the details of the event. The staff requested the following individuals and assigned the following duties:

- Commissioners (17) – Congress speakers, Session leaders, dignitary greeters and Commission table management
- Community Advisory Council Members (17) – Congress speakers, Session leaders, Session recorders, dignitary greeters and Commission Table management

In addition to the aforementioned duties, a number of additional logistics management processes had to be staffed and scheduled (requiring an hour-by-hour list of assignments and locations directed by the Logistics Captain):

- Registration Table Staffing – x8 volunteers during peak hours and x4 volunteers during non-peak hours to collect contact information from attendees
- Commission Table Staffing – 1-2 special volunteers to man Commission information table and sell books
- Parking Management – 2-4 volunteers to direct attendees from parking lot to building (front and back)
- Exhibition Hall Set-up – 2 volunteers to assist with table set-up and materials
- Traffic Flow Management – up to x8 volunteers to direct attendees to their break-out sessions
- Staff Assitants- 4 volunteers were tasked with shadowing the Staff during the course of the entire day
- **Total Volunteers** - Given the duality of functions and timing, a total of 20 student volunteers had to be recruited for the function.

Student volunteers were recruited by the following process:

- Notifications sent to all Department of Italian Professors about the event in early September

- Hosting of three student conference events (one for graduate students, one for undergraduate students and one for all students and faculty on Rutgers campus on three separate days, with the last requiring a pizza dinner) to advertise Commission, Congress and the need for volunteer staffing
- Visitations to over 30 Italian language classes (with the permission of the Chairperson of the Department of Italian) for a 5-minute recruitment pitch
- Posting of over 100 on-campus fliers advertising the Congress and the recruitment events
- Email blasts (x2) by the Department of Italian to over 700 students requesting assistance
- Active solicitation and follow-up with interested students

Professional Staffing

While volunteers were required to make the event run smoothly, professional staff had to be retained by the Catering Services and Rutgers University for the following purposes:

- Setting breakfast and lunch and beverage refreshment (x2 until 1:00pm)
- Seating re-arrangements in auditorium/hall and table set-up (x4 people)
- Sound, light and temperature controls (x1 person for the entire event)

Training and Informing Volunteer Staff and Speakers

All Commissioners, Speakers, Community Advisory Council Members and Volunteers received the following information packages ten days prior to the event:

- Program
- Assignment schedule and location
- Session Break-Out Management
- Session Reporting Schedule
- Agendas for Break-Out Sessions
- Miscellaneous tailored information

Two hour-long training sessions were held for the Rutgers University students by the professional staff 48 hours prior to the Congress.

III. Attendance of the Congress

Methods for Estimating Attendance

Using various headcount methods, the Congress attracted over 500 attendees during the course of the day. Although a registration table was manned during the entire event, not all participants chose to register. In addition, while many attendees did register in advance, there may have been over 200 walk-ins who came during the course of the day (as opposed to the beginning of the event). The following methodology demonstrates how the number of attendees was estimated.

Headcount Methods	Totals
Auditorium Seating During Keynotes (1)	450 (out of 500)
Speaker and Commissioner Seating	+ 20 (filled)
Standing Attendees in Auditorium	+ 15
Exhibition Hall Attendees During Keynotes	+ 50
Estimate of Post-Keynote Speaker Arrivals (2)	+ 70
Estimated Entrants During Course of Day	605
Lunches Consumed (3)	432
Average of High and Low Counts	519

- (1) Seats were arranged in a two-column format, with four 125-seat blocks, totaling 500 seats (excluding dais and near-dais seating). During the keynote speakers, the auditorium was filled near capacity, with 10-15 persons standing in the rear and about 50 persons in the Exhibition Hall.
- (2) 450 lunches were ordered and only 18 were left at the end of the program. While some people may have consumed two lunches, or even taken one home, a large number of persons left prior to lunch being served at 1pm.

Attendance Vs. Publicity

An important analysis regarding the number of attendees is the comparison to the number of individuals that were invited to the event. This provides the Commission with a metric to estimate future events.

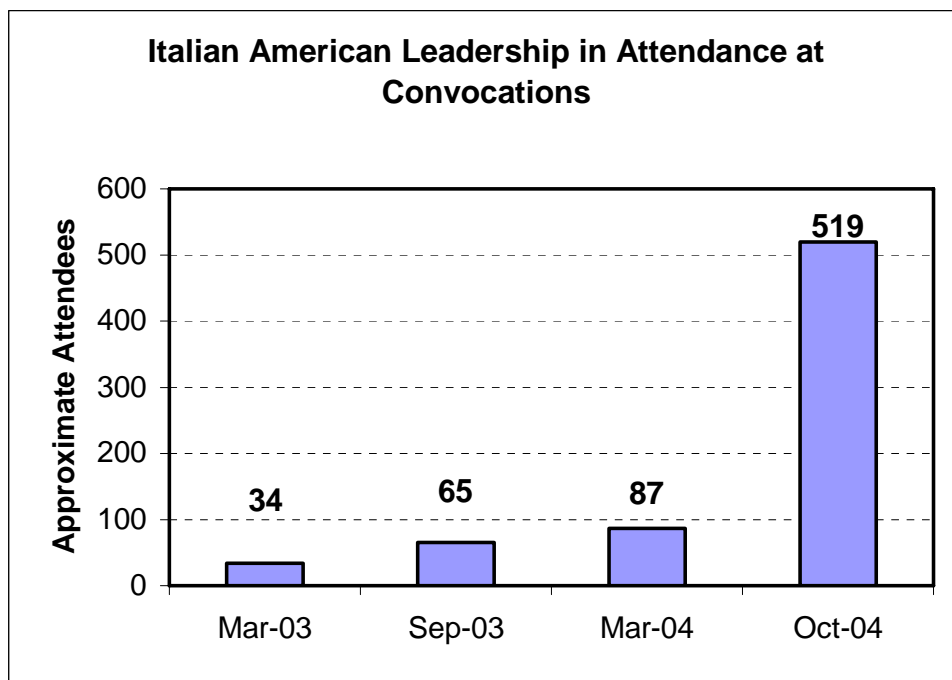
Attendance Statistics	Totals
Notices and Mailings to Individuals	5,000+
Mailings to Organizations	450
Total (1)	5, 450+
Adjusted Mailings (2)	1,600
Advanced Registrants	460
Estimated Incremental Walk-Ins (3)	59
Total Approximated Attendees	519
Adjusted Hit Rate (Attendees/Adj. Mailings)	32% (4)

- (1) Excludes publicity through media, group presentations, requesting organizations to notify members via emails, website and telecommunications.
- (2) Most individuals received at least 3 mailings, therefore the approximate number of persons reached directly with multiple letters is estimated to be around 1,600.
- (3) This estimate was derived from the assumption that all advanced registrants came to the Congress and the difference between the number of attendees and the advance registrants were unregistered walk-ins.
- (4) Only reflects hit rate for targeted mailings.

Comparative Attendance

The estimate of the number of attendees for the Congress is approximately 520.

This represents a massive step-up from the prior Italian American Leadership Convocations hosted by the Commission during 2003 and 2004. While the 2004 Italian Liberation Day Commemoration had over 1,000 people registered, this event was a working session – not a celebratory event – was not held at the Governor’s Mansion, did not have a Governor’s Invitation and was held in October (a rather busy month for Italian American organizations and citizens in New Jersey).



Using the prior three Italian Leadership Convocations as benchmarks, the Congress generated a greater number of participants than all three Convocations combined.

Italian American Organization Attendance

One of the objectives of the Congress was to bring together representatives of various Italian American Organizations in New Jersey. More than 60 Italian American organizations, societies and educational institutions were represented at this event.

The following is a list of those organizations whose members registered.

1. ALDI
2. Amici Della Lingua Italiana
3. Amici Italian Club
4. Ieri-Oggi-Domani
5. Bloomfield Mandolin Orchestra
6. Bloomfield High School Italian Club
7. Center for Italian Culture
8. CIAO of Mercer County
9. Coccia Institute
- 10.Colombian Foundation
- 11.Dante Alighieri Society of Jersey City
- 12.East Brunswick Centurions
- 13.East Brunswick High School Italian Club
- 14.Federation of Italian American Society of NJ
- 15.Federazione Siciliana
- 16.Freehold Township High School Italian Club
- 17.Garibaldi Meucci Museum -- OSIA National
- 18.Holy Cross High School Italian Club
- 19.America Oggi
- 20.Italia Oggi
- 21.Italian American Channel
- 22.Italian American Heritage Club of Hunterdon County
- 23.Italian American Police Society of NJ
- 24.Italian American Senior Culture Club of Greenbriar
- 25.Italian Club at Rutgers University
- 26.Italian Culture Club of Lake Ridge
- 27.Italian Culture Club of Toms River
- 28.Italian Heritage Association of North Jersey
- 29.Italian Teachers Association of America
- 30.Italian Teachers Association of New Jersey
- 31.Holmdel High School Italian Club
- 32.L'Italico

- 33.M.C.I.A.F.A.
- 34.Mercer County Italian American Festival
- 35.Montgomery High School Italian Club
- 36.National Italian American Foundation
- 37.North Brunswick Italian American Social Club
- 38.Ocean County Columbus Day Panel Committee
- 39.Ocean County United Italian American Club
- 40.OneVoice Committee
- 41.Orders Sons of Italy in America National
- 42.OSIA -- Enrico Fermi Lodge
- 43.OSIA -- Frank Sinatra Lodge
- 44.OSIA -- Marconi Lodge
- 45.OSIA -- Mezzogiorno Lodge
- 46.OSIA in North Bergen
- 47.Paramus High School Italian Club
- 48.Passaic Valley Regional High School Italian Club
- 49.Raritan High School Italian Club
- 50.Rutgers University Department of Italian
- 51.Rutgers University Committee on Italian Studies
- 52.Sicilian Federation of New Jersey
- 53.Society di Saint Elia
- 54.UNICO National
- 55.UNICO – Montville Chapter
- 56.UNICO – Elizabeth Chapter
- 57.UNICO -- Brick Chapter
- 58.UNICO – Maplewood Chapter
- 59.UNICO – Hillside Chapter
- 60.UNICO – Plainfield Chapter
- 61.Valenti Committee
- 62.VITA
- 63.Wilmington Friends of Italian Culture

IV. Recommendations from the Congress

Resolutions Passed

The Congress participants passed three resolutions in a plenary session by unanimous acclamation. The three resolutions are presented below.

Congress Resolution 2004-1: “Adoption of the Principle of Unity”

Whereas, the Italian and Italian American community has seen fit to join together to discuss the importance of unifying the efforts of the Italian American community in New Jersey;

Whereas, the Italian American community recognizes the need for superior coordination to address issues affecting Italian Americans; and

Whereas, the Italian American community seeks to preserve the Italian Heritage for future generations of Italians and Italian Americans in New Jersey;

Be It Resolved, by this 1st Statewide NJ Congress of Italian American Organizations, that the Italian and Italian American community of New Jersey should adopt the principle of unity and that the members of the NJ community represented here will work together to increase the coordination of their efforts throughout the State of New Jersey during the coming calendar year.

Congress Resolution 2004-2: “Organizing the 2nd NJ Congress”

Whereas, the Italian American community seeks to unity and coordinate their efforts in the State of New Jersey; and

Whereas, the members of the Italian and Italian American community gathered together on October 23, 2004 have found this Congress to be an important means of networking, planning and organizing;

Be It Resolved, by this 1st Statewide NJ Congress of Italian American Organizations, that the Italian and Italian American community of New Jersey represented here today petitions the New Jersey Italian and Italian American Heritage Commission to organize a 2nd Statewide Congress for Italian American Organizations during the coming year.

Congress Resolution 2004-3: “Creating an Italian American Political Caucus”

Whereas, the Italian American community seeks to unify and coordinate their efforts in the State of New Jersey; and

Whereas, the New Jersey Congress of Italian American Organizations supports the coming together, on a bipartisan basis, of New Jersey Legislators to form a caucus for the purpose of discussing, advancing, and resolving issues affecting Italians and Americans of Italian decent;

Be it resolved, through the efforts of this Congress that members of the Political Organization workshop on October 23, 2004 will explore, assist, and organize the development of a New Jersey Italian American caucus in the State Legislature.

Workshop Recommendations

Each workshop session elected a captain, who then reported in plenary session the top three recommendations for the Commission and the Italian American community. Some workshops offered additional recommendations.

1. Combating Stereotyping and Discrimination of Italian Americans

Workshop session focused on issues related to addressing media stereotyping and defamation of Italian Americans (Chaired by Dr. William Connell and Dr. Emmanuel Alfano).

Recommendation 1: Development of more television and film programs promoting positive images of Italians and Italian Americans

Community Action: Need to identify and support screenplay writers of dramatic films and television programming to positive programs

Recommendation 2: Improved organization of Italian American activists

Community Action: Encourage people to use and create email networks

Recommendation 3: Support of dedicated umbrella organizations designed to monitor and combat Italian American stereotyping

Community Action: Need to fund anti-discrimination endeavors, perhaps through a separate organization such as the Anti Defamation League or the NAACP.

2. Development of Italian American Business Community Networks in NJ

Workshop session focused on Italian American commercial networking and improving commercial relations with Italy (Chaired by Commissioner Mauro Checchio and Community Advisory Council Chairman Frank Gargione)

Recommendation 1: Enhance bi-lateral trade between New Jersey and Italy

Community Action: Need to organize entities that focus on Italian commercial opportunities

Recommendation 2: Grow relationships by promotion within the Italian American community

Community Action: Use memberships into existing organizations to network more effectively and offer discounts on cross-promotional opportunities

Recommendation 3: Improve fund raising efforts for Italian American not-for-profit groups

Community Action: Educate the business community about the importance of supporting not-for-profit Italian American groups that preserve and promote Italian culture

Recommendation 4: Improve networking among Italian American entrepreneurs

Recommendation 5: Build Organizations / Business database to establish networks

Recommendation 6: Support Italian American business networking group

3. Promotion of Italian American Political Organizations in New Jersey

Workshop session focused on developing Italian American political organizations (Chaired by Commissioners Morresi and Paragano).

Recommendation 1: Support the creation of an Italian American Political Caucus in the NJ Legislature

Community Action: Identify the issues affecting Italian Americans in NJ and develop a legislative agenda, using other States as models for research

Recommendation 2: Develop the appropriate model for such an endeavor

Community Action: Conceptualize the organizational structure needed to promote the Italian American legislative agenda and create strong advocacy groups to educate the policy-makers

Recommendation 3: Include the widest political and organizational spectrum

Community Action: Bring together grass-roots organizations and former government officials at the municipal and county levels to promote the idea on a bi-partisan basis

4. Developing “Scuola Italiana” Summer School Program for NJ Students

Workshop session focused on developing an Italian Heritage summer school program for students, similar to the NJ Governor School programs (Chaired by Dr. Laura White and Mr. Joseph Marinzoli).

Recommendation 1: Plan to develop an Italian Heritage Summer School Program for High School Students lasting four to six weeks

Community Action: Generate community support to raise funding, identify university facility and create selection process for students and faculty

Recommendation 2: Create curriculum for core summer classes that all students would attend several times a week

Specific Topics: History of Italy, Italian Geography, Italian Conversational Language, Introduction to Italian Literature, Italian Culture, Italian Cuisine

Recommendation 3: Plan field trips once per week for students

Specific Field Trips: Italian Opera at the Metropolitan Opera House, Italian Art at NJ Museums, Film Screening of Italian Movie, Culinary Schools, Italian Fashion Shows, Italian Concerts

Recommendation 4: Establish evening speaker series for students during week

Specific Topics: Italian Music, Italian Sports, Life in Italy for Teen-Agers, Italian Film, Food/Culinary Demonstration, Experts on Geography, Modern Fashion, Teacher from Italy speaking on Italian School System, Different Methods of Learning the Language, Italian Politician speaking on political system, University professor speaking on Italian Literature

Recommendation 5: Establish afternoon and weekend activities for students

Specific Topics: Cooking class, Sculpting class, Tombola, Bocci, Calcio, Glass-blowing

Recommendation 6: Culminate experience with 10-day trip to Italy

5. Developing Italian American Youth Programs in the State of New Jersey

Workshop session focused on developing Italian American Youth Programs (Chaired by Mr. Peter Tarquinio and Dr. Gina Miele).

Recommendation 1: Establish Mentoring Program for Italian American Students

Community Action: Create relationships between local schools and Italian businesses to establish mentoring opportunities for High School and College students; create an exchange program for Italian students to have an opportunity to mentor with American businesses and vice versa.

Recommendation 2: Refine database of Italian American Organizations

Community Action: Create a list of organizations to who could potentially sponsor such an exchange or offer positions for mentoring purposes

Recommendation 3: Establish database of private Italian language schools and programs

Community Action: Cultivate youth interest through identification of NJ and Italy-based language courses for students during the year and during the summer.

6. Promoting the Italian Language in the State of New Jersey

Workshop session focused on assessing the issues related to the promotion of the Italian language in the school and university system in New Jersey (Chaired by Dr. Marisa Trubiano).

Recommendation 1: Research effort to assess supply and demand for Italian language courses in the State of NJ

Community Actions: Survey and catalog adult Italian language classes in the State; Selected polling of parents with children interested in studying Italian; analyze 2004 NJDOE survey of Italian language courses in NJ's schools; Create event opportunities to bring Italian American community together to

assess interest in Italian language; Create event opportunities for children interested in studying the Italian language; survey and catalog university programs teaching the Italian language.

Recommendation 2: Foster University and School Relationships

Community Actions: The Commission, through the Higher Education Committee or a new Committee focused on Promoting the Italian Language can act as a centralized point of contact; Mount Public Relations campaign for Italian Teachers education and Italian related programs; establish a "Hot Line" service for information related to NJ Italian language programs; Promote school and university courses in Italian Heritage; Work to create dual certification programs, such as "Business and Italian"; provide Advanced Placement Italian Language information to schools

Recommendation 3: Focused Effort on Statewide Level to Prevent Loss of Funding for Italian Language Courses for Schools and Universities

Community Actions: Coordinating Italian American organizations in local communities to put pressure on local school boards; use Commission to focus effort on State Legislature; coordinate efforts of university Italian language departments to increase funding; solicit assistance from Italian Government

7. Coordinating Efforts of Italian American Organizations

Workshop session focused on assessing ways in which NJ's Italian American Organizations can cooperate in order to promote and preserve the Italian Heritage in the State of New Jersey.

Recommendation 1: Organizations should incorporate educational components to their activities to educate their members about the Italian Heritage.

Specific Ideas: Invite speakers and presenters to meetings and events to lecture on Italian Heritage topics, show Italian films and documentaries related to the Italian culture, promote events in other organizations related to the Italian culture.

Recommendation 2: Organizations need to improve inter-organizational communication.

Specific Ideas: Organizations must encourage their members to use the Internet (emails, etc), Organizations should find cost-effective means of developing websites, Statewide organizations like the Commission should email blast announcements related to events around the State, Commission should maintain a Statewide Community Calendar for Italian events